

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 3, 9, 12, 16, 19, 22, and 25, as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus comprising:  
sheet holding means for holding a plurality of supplied sheets in a stack;  
first sheet stacking means on which sheets that have been held by said sheet holding means are stacked;  
second sheet stacking means, provided downstream of said first sheet stacking means with respect to a sheet conveying direction, on which sheets are stacked;  
first sheet conveying means for discharging the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means to said second sheet stacking means; and  
second sheet conveying means for conveying the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means toward said second sheet stacking means;  
wherein after the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means are conveyed by said second sheet conveying means toward said second sheet stacking means by a predetermined amount so that a downstream edge of the sheet stacked on said first sheet stacking means protrudes in a downstream side beyond a downstream edge of the sheets held by said sheet holding means, said first sheet conveying means conveys the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means and the sheets held by said sheet holding means to thereby discharge the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means to said second sheet stacking means and to stack the sheets held by said sheet holding means onto said first sheet stacking means.

2. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said second sheet conveying means is adapted to push a trailing edge, with respect to the sheet conveying direction, of the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means to thereby convey those sheets.

3. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, further comprising control means for controlling said second sheet conveying means in such a way that said second sheet conveying means conveys the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking means until the downstream edge of those sheets protrude in the downstream side beyond the downstream edge of the sheets held by said sheet holding means by a predetermined amount.

4. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said sheet holding means has a held sheet conveying portion for conveying said held sheets, and said control means controls sheet conveying speed of said held sheet conveying portion and sheet conveying speed of said first sheet conveying means in such a way as to make them equal.

5. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said control means controls activation timing of said held sheet conveying portion and said first sheet conveying means in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

6. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said control means controls sheet conveying speed of said first sheet conveying means and sheet conveying speed of said second sheet conveying speed in such a way to make them equal.

7. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said control means controls activation timing of said first sheet conveying means and said second sheet conveying means in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

8. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet; and  
a sheet processing apparatus for performing a processing on a sheet on which an image has been formed by said image forming means;  
wherein said sheet processing apparatus comprises a sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1 or 2.

9. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
a sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~ for performing a processing on a sheet on which an image has been formed by said image forming means; and  
control means for controlling said second sheet conveying means in such a way that said second sheet conveying means conveys the sheets stacked on said first sheet stacking

means until the downstream edge of those sheets protrude in the downstream side beyond the downstream edge of the sheets held by said sheet holding means by a predetermined amount.

10. (Original) An image forming apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said sheet holding means has a held sheet conveying portion for conveying said held sheets, and said control means controls sheet conveying speed of said held sheet conveying portion and sheet conveying speed of said first sheet conveying means in such a way as to make them equal.

11. (Original) An image forming apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said control means controls activation timing of said held sheet conveying portion and said first sheet conveying means in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

12. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said control means controls sheet conveying speed of said first sheet conveying means and sheet conveying speed of said second sheet conveying means ~~speed~~ in such a way as to make them equal.

13. (Original) An image forming apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said control means controls activation timing of said first sheet conveying means and said second sheet conveying means in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

14. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus comprising:

a buffer unit which holds a plurality of supplied sheets in a stack;

a processing tray on which sheets have been held by said buffer unit are stacked ;

a sheet stacker, provided downstream of said processing tray with respect to a sheet conveying direction, on which sheets are to be stacked;

sheet discharging rotary member which discharges the sheets stacked on said processing tray to said sheet stacker;

discharging assist member which conveys the sheets stacked on said processing tray toward said sheet stacker; and

a controller wherein after the sheets stacked on said processing tray are conveyed by said discharging assist member toward said sheet stacker by a predetermined amount so that a downstream edge of the sheet stacked on said processing tray protrudes in a downstream side beyond a downstream edge of the sheets held by said buffer unit, said sheet discharging rotary member conveys the sheets stacked on said processing tray and the sheets held by said buffer unit to thereby discharge the sheets stacked on said processing tray to said sheet stacker and to stack the sheets held by said buffer unit onto said processing tray.

15. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said discharging assist member is adapted to push a trailing edge, with respect to the sheet conveying direction, of the sheets stacked on said processing tray to thereby convey those sheets.

16. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 or 15, ~~further comprising~~ wherein said controller ~~which~~ controls said discharging assist member in such a way that said discharging assist member conveys the sheets stacked on said processing tray until the downstream edge of those sheets protrude in the downstream side beyond the downstream edge of the sheets held by said buffer unit by a predetermined amount.

17. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said buffer unit has a held sheet conveying portion for conveying said held sheets, and said controller controls sheet conveying speed of said held sheet conveying portion and sheet conveying speed of said sheet discharging rotary member in such a way as to make them equal.

18. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said controller controls activation timing of said held sheet conveying portion and said sheet discharging rotary member in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

19. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said controller controls sheet conveying speed of said sheet discharging rotary member and sheet conveying speed of said ~~second sheet conveying speed~~ discharging assist member in such a way as to make them equal.

20. (Previously Presented) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said controller controls activation timing of said sheet discharging rotary member and said discharging assist member in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

21. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet; and  
a sheet processing apparatus for performing a processing on a sheet on which an image has been formed by said image forming means;  
wherein said sheet processing apparatus comprises a sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 or 15.

22. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
a sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 or 15 for performing a processing on a sheet on which an image has been formed by said image forming means; ~~and~~  
wherein said controller ~~which~~ controls said discharging assist member in such a way that said discharging assist member conveys the sheets stacked on said processing tray until the downstream edge of those sheets protrude in the downstream side beyond the downstream edge of the sheets held by said buffer unit by a predetermined amount.

23. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said buffer unit has a held sheet conveying portion for conveying said held sheets, and said controller controls sheet conveying speed of said held sheet conveying portion and sheet conveying speed of said sheet discharging rotary member in such a way as to make them equal.

24. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said controller controls activation timing of said held sheet conveying portion and said sheet discharging rotary member in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.

25. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said controller controls sheet conveying speed of said sheet discharging rotary member and sheet conveying speed of said ~~second sheet conveying speed~~ discharging assist member in such a way as to make them equal.

26. (Previously Presented) An image forming apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said controller controls activation timing of said sheet discharging rotary member and said discharging assist member in such a way that the sheet conveying speeds of them are made equal when the sheets are conveyed.